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CENTRAL FAX CENTER****AUG 24 2007**
Serial No. 10/735,573Part 1 – Claims Listing

1. (Previously presented) A virtual control system for controlling surgical equipment in an operating room while a surgeon performs a surgical procedure on a patient, comprising:
 - a virtual control device including an image of a control device located on
5 a surface and a sensor for interrogating contact interaction of an object with the image on the surface, the virtual control device delivering an interaction signal indicative of the contact interaction of the object with the image; and
 - a system controller connected to receive the interaction signal from the virtual control device and to deliver a control signal to the surgical equipment in
10 response to the interaction signal to control the surgical equipment in response to the contact interaction of the object with the image.
2. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 1, wherein:
 - the object is one of a finger or a foot of the surgeon;
 - the image is one of a projected light image or a printed image of a
5 control panel for the surgical equipment;
 - the image includes at least one contact control area which represents a control function of the surgical equipment; and
 - the interaction with the image is contact of the object with the contact control area.
3. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 2, wherein:
 - the sensor optically interrogates the contact interaction of the object with the image.
4. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 2, wherein:
 - the object is a finger of the surgeon;
 - the image of the control device is an image of a control panel of the
5 surgical equipment;

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the interaction with the image is contact of the surgeon's finger with the contact control area; and

the image of the control panel is located within a sterile field of the surgical procedure.

5. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 4, wherein:

the sensor optically interrogates contact interaction of the surgeon's finger with the contact control area.

6. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 5, wherein:

the image of the control panel includes a multiplicity of different contact control areas, each contact control area representing a different control function of
5 the surgical equipment; and

the sensor optically interrogates the contact interaction of the surgeon's finger with each of the different contact control areas.

7. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 6, wherein:

the image is a projected light image;

the virtual control device further includes an image projector which
5 projects the light image of the control panel; and

the virtual control device projects the image of the control panel adjacent to a surgical site and within the sterile field.

8. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 2, wherein:

the object is a foot of the surgeon;

the image is located on a floor of the operating room beneath an
5 operating table; and

the interaction with the image is contact of the surgeon's foot with the contact control area.

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9. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 8, wherein:

the sensor optically interrogates contact interaction of the surgeon's foot with the image.

5 10. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 9, wherein:

the contact control area of the image represents an activation function of the surgical equipment.

11. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 9, wherein:

the image is a projected light image;

the virtual control device further includes an image projector which

5 projects the light image; and further comprising:

a position tag attached to the surgeon's foot; and wherein:

the sensor optically interrogates the interaction of the surgeon's foot with the contact control area and also optically interrogates the position of the position tag; and

10 the virtual control device supplies the interaction signal only upon contact with the contact control area by the foot to which the position tag is attached.

12. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 11, wherein:

the virtual control device responds to the interrogated position of the position tag to control the image projector to project the image of the contact control area on the floor at a position relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

13. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 12, wherein:

the position at which the contact control area is projected on the floor relative to the position tag is laterally adjacent to the surgeon's foot.

14. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 12, wherein:

the system controller is connected to the virtual control device to obtain information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area
5 relative to the interrogated position of the position tag; and further comprising:

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a system display comprising a projector connected to the system controller and operative to create a system display image presenting the information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

15. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 11, wherein:

the system controller is connected to the virtual control device to obtain information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area
5 relative to the interrogated position of the position tag; and further comprising:

a face shield to be worn by the surgeon; and

a heads up display comprising a heads up projector connected to the system controller and interactive with the face shield to create a heads up display image on the face shield presenting the information describing the position of the
10 projected image of the contact control area relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

16. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 11, further comprising:

a proximity indicator connected to the system controller and responsive to the interrogated position of the position tag relative to the projected image of the
5 contact control area to signal a degree of separation between the position tag and the contact control area.

17. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 3, wherein:

the optical sensor responds to reflected light from the object interacting with the contact control area to supply a signal indicative of the contact interaction of
5 the object with the contact control area.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 17, wherein:

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the signal supplied by the optical sensor relates to the degree of separation of the object from contact with the contact control area.

20. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 17, wherein:

the virtual control device further comprises a light source which projects incident light onto the contact control area; and

the reflected light is reflected from the incident light by the object
5 interacting with the contact control area.

21. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 20, wherein:

the incident light projected from the light source is a pulsed beam of incident light which is scanned through a range of scanning angles over the surface
5 upon which the image is projected;

the reflected light from the object interacting with the contact control area is derived from the pulsed incident light; and

the virtual control device further comprises a device controller connected to the light source and sensor and which is operative to determine contact
10 interaction of the object with the contact control area based on relative timing information between corresponding pulses of the incident light and the reflected light and the scanning angle of the incident light which causes the reflected light.

22. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 20, wherein:

the image is a projected light image; and

the virtual control device further comprises an image projector to project
5 a beam of image light to create the image and the contact control area of the image.

23. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 22, wherein:

the virtual control device further comprises a device controller connected to the image projector to control the image projector to project the beam of
5 image light through a range of projection angles over the surface to create the image and the contact control area of the image;

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the incident light projected from the light source is a pulsed beam of incident light which is scanned through a range of scanning angles over the surface upon which the image is projected;

10 the reflected light from the object interacting with the contact control area is also pulsed due to reflection of the pulsed incident light;

the device controller is connected to the light source to control the scanning angles of the pulsed beam of incident light in correlation with the projection angles of the beam of image light; and

15 the device controller interrogates the contact interaction of the object with the contact control area based on the correlated relationship between scanning angles of the incident light and the projection angles of the image light and the relative timing between corresponding pulses of the incident light and the reflected light.

24. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 20, wherein:

the virtual control device further comprises an image projector to project image light to create the image and a multiplicity of different contact control areas

5 within the image, each contact control area representing a different control function of the surgical equipment;

the image projector projects the image light in a correlated relationship with the incident light projected by the light source; and

10 the virtual control device further comprises a device controller connected to the light source, the image projector and the sensor to determine the contact interaction of the object with the contact control area based on a correlation between the incident light and the reflected light and a correlation between the image light and the incident light.

25. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 15, wherein:

the surgical equipment supplies information describing the status, control and functionality of the surgical equipment;

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5 the surgical equipment includes patient monitoring equipment which supplies information describing a condition of the patient during the surgical procedure; and

the heads up projector presents information on the face shield describing at least some of the control, status and functionality of the surgical
10 equipment and the condition of the patient.

26.-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently amended) A virtual control system as defined in claim 15, wherein:

virtual control device and the system controller are connected by a wireless communication path;

5 the system controller and the surgical equipment are connected by a wireless communication path; and

the heads up system projector and the system controller are connected by a wireless communication path.

30.-33. (Canceled)

34. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 124, wherein:

at least one of the identification tags containing information identifying the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and

5 further comprising:

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the operating room, the scanner reading the information from the one identification tag; and wherein:

the system controller establishes control over the surgical equipment in
10 response to the information read from the one identification tag.

35. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the information from the one identification tag describes the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment; and

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5 the system controller responds to the initial operative setting information read from the one identification tag to establish the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment.

36. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the one identification tag contains information which describes the surgeon and the surgical procedure;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment for the surgical procedure; and

the system controller establishes the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment in response to the information read from the one identification tag
10 and the information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting.

37. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the one identification tag also contains information which describes the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates initial operative settings of the surgical equipment with the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and

the system controller establishes the initial operative settings of the surgical equipment in response to the information stored in memory and the
10 information read from the one identification tag which describes the surgical procedure.

38. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the identification tag is associated with the surgeon by the surgeon wearing the identification tag.

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39. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 38, wherein:

the surgeon identification tag is worn by the surgeon on at least one of a surgical gown, a surgical glove or a foot cover.

40. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:
the identification tag is associated with the patient by attachment to surgical drapes which cover the patient during the procedure.

41. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the identification tag is associated with the patient by attachment to the patient's body during the surgical procedure.

42. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the one identification tag contains information which describes the surgeon and the patient;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the patient; and

the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the one identification tag correlating the surgeon and the patient.

43. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the one identification tag contains information which describes the surgeon;

5 the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to information read from the one identification tag which describes the surgeon; and further comprising:

an input device connected to the system controller by which to supply information to the system controller; and wherein:

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the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment in response to override information supplied to the system controller through the input device if the information read from the one identification tag does not describe the surgeon.

44. (Original) A virtual control system as defined in claim 43, wherein: the override information is a password.

45. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 34, wherein:

the one identification tag contains information which describes the surgeon;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment; and further comprising:

a system display comprising a projector connected to the system controller and operative to create a display image presenting the information
10 describing the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment.

46. (Canceled)

47. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 123, wherein:

the surgeon identification tag is attached to the hand of the surgeon, the surgeon identification tag containing information identifying the surgeon;

5 a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the operating room, the scanner reading the information from the surgeon identification tag;

the virtual control device further includes an image projector which projects a light image of the control panel adjacent to a surgical site within a sterile
10 field;

the interaction with the control panel image is by the hand of the surgeon; and

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the system controller responds to the information read from the surgeon identification tag to permit control of the surgical equipment only in response to the interaction of the hand of the surgeon upon which the surgeon identification tag is attached with the control panel image.

48.-51. (Canceled)

52. (Previously presented) A virtual control system for controlling surgical equipment in an operating room while a surgeon performs a surgical procedure on a patient, comprising:

an identification tag associated with at least one of the patient or the
5 surgeon, the identification tag containing information describing at least one of the surgeon, a hand of the surgeon, a foot of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

a virtual control device including an image of a control device and a
sensor for interrogating interaction of the surgeon with the control device image and
10 for reading information from the identification tag, the virtual control device delivering an interaction signal indicative of the interaction of the surgeon with the control device image and also delivering information obtained from reading the identification tag;
and

a system controller responsive to the interaction signal and the
15 information read from the identification tag to deliver a control signal to the surgical equipment to control the surgical equipment only in response to the interaction with the control device image by the surgeon who is described by the information obtained by reading the identification tag.

53.-55. (Canceled)

56. (Currently amended) A virtual control system as defined in claim 52,
[[56;]] further comprising:

a face shield to be worn by the surgeon; and wherein:

the display image is created by the projector on the face shield.

57. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 52,
further comprising:

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a display comprising a projector connected to the system controller and operative to create a display image at a location within the operating room removed
5 from the surgical equipment; and

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the operating room, the scanner reading the information from the identification tag; and wherein:

the system controller responds to the information read from the
10 identification tag to cause the projector to display information related to at least some of the information read from the identification tag.

58. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 57, wherein:

the information displayed describes an initial operative setting of surgical equipment to be used in the procedure.

59. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 57, wherein:

the information displayed describes the procedure to be performed on the patient.

60. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 57, wherein:

the information displayed describes the patient upon which the procedure is to be performed.

61. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 57, wherein:

the information displayed describes the surgeon who is to perform the procedure.

62.-65. (Canceled)

66. (Previously presented) A method for controlling surgical equipment in an operating room while a surgeon performs a surgical procedure on a patient, comprising:

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creating an image of a control device for the surgical equipment on a
5 surface;

interrogating interaction of the surgeon by contact with the control
device image on the surface; and

controlling the surgical equipment in response to the contact interaction
of the surgeon with the image on the surface.

67. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:

creating at least one contact control area of the control device image;
and

5 interrogating contact interaction of one of a finger or a foot of the
surgeon with the image on the surface to control the surgical equipment.

68. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 67, further
comprising:

optically interrogating the contact interaction of the surgeon's finger or
foot with the image.

69. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:

projecting an optical image of a control panel for the surgical equipment
on the surface;

5 including within the projected image of the control panel a contact
control area which represents a control function of the surgical equipment; and

optically interrogating contact of a finger of the surgeon with the contact
control area of the control panel image to control surgical equipment.

70. (Original) A method as defined in claim 69, further comprising:
projecting the image of the control panel within a sterile field of the
surgical procedure.

71. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 69, further
comprising:

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projecting the image of the control panel on surgical drapes adjacent to a surgical site.

72. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 69, further comprising:

including in the projected optical image of the control panel a multiplicity of different contact control areas, each contact control area representing a different control function of the surgical equipment; and

optically interrogating the contact interaction of the surgeon's finger with each of the different contact control areas.

73. (Original) A method as defined in claim 66, further comprising:
using a printed image of the control device to create the image of the control device.

74. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further comprising:

projecting an optical image of a foot switch of the surgical equipment on a floor of the operating room;

5 including within the projected image of the foot switch a contact control area which represents an activation control function of the surgical equipment;

optically interrogating contact of a foot of the surgeon with the contact control area of the foot switch image; and

activating the surgical equipment in response to interrogated contact of
10 the foot of the surgeon with the contact control area of the foot switch image.

75. (Original) A method as defined in claim 74, further comprising:
attaching a position tag to the surgeon's foot; and
optically interrogating the position of the position tag relative to the contact control area.

76. (Original) A method as defined in claim 75, further comprising:
projecting the foot switch image with the contact control area on the floor at a position relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

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77. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 76, further comprising:

projecting the contact control area on the floor laterally adjacent to the interrogated position of the position tag.

78. (Original) A method as defined in claim 76, further comprising:

displaying information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

79. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 78, further comprising:

covering the surgeon's face with a face shield during the surgical procedure; and

5 projecting on the face shield information describing the position of the contact control area on the floor relative to the interrogated position of the position tag.

80. (Original) A method as defined in claim 75, further comprising:

indicating proximity of the position tag relative to the contact control area.

81. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 67, further comprising:

optically interrogating contact interaction with the contact control area by using light reflected from the position of the one finger or foot relative to the contact
5 control area.

82.-83. (Canceled)

84. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 78, further comprising:

obtaining information from the surgical equipment concerning the status,
5 control and functionality of the surgical equipment;

using patient monitoring equipment during the surgical procedure to determine information describing a condition of the patient;

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obtaining the information from the patient monitoring equipment describing the condition of the patient; and

displaying the information describing the status, control and functionality of the surgical equipment and the information describing the condition of the patient on a display remote from the patient monitoring equipment.

85. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 84, further comprising:

covering the surgeon's face with a face shield during the surgical procedure;

5 projecting on the face shield the information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area relative to the interrogated position of the position tag, the information describing the status, control and functionality of the surgical equipment and the information describing the condition of the patient.

86. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further comprising:

associating an identification tag with at least one of the surgeon or the patient;

5 presenting information at the identification tag describing at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; reading the information from the identification tag; and establishing an initial operative setting of the surgical equipment automatically in response to the information read from the identification tag.

87. (Original) A method as defined in claim 86, further comprising: optically reading the information from the identification tag.

88. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 86, further comprising:

presenting information at the identification tag describing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment; and

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5 establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment automatically in response to reading the information describing the initial operative setting from the identification tag.

89. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 86, further comprising:

presenting information at the identification tag which describes the surgeon;

5 storing information which describes the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment;

correlating the information which describes the surgeon with the stored information; and

establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment based
10 on correlating the information which describes the surgeon and the stored information.

90. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 89, further comprising:

presenting information at the identification tag which describes the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

5 storing information which describes the surgeon's preferred initial operative settings of the surgical equipment for each of a plurality of different surgical procedures;

correlating the information which describes the surgical procedure with the stored information; and

10 establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment based on correlating the described surgical procedure and the stored information.

91. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further comprising:

associating an identification tag with the surgeon;

presenting information at the identification tag describing the surgeon;

5 reading the information from the identification tag;

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supplying override information from a source other than the
identification tag; and

permitting operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the
information which describes the surgeon read from the identification tag or in
10 response to the override information supplied.

92. (Original) A method as defined in claim 91, further comprising:
supplying a password as the override information.

93. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:

5 attaching an identification tag attached to the hand of the surgeon;
presenting information at the identification tag describing the surgeon;
reading the information from the identification tag;
interacting the hand of the surgeon with the image; and
permitting control of the surgical equipment only in response to the
interaction of the hand of the surgeon to which the tag is attached with the image.

94. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:

5 projecting an optical image of the control device on the surface;
including a contact control area within the image which represents a
control function of the surgical equipment;
creating a portion of the image separate from the contract control area;
obtaining information from the surgical equipment concerning the status,
control and functionality of the surgical equipment; and
displaying the information describing the control, status and functionality
10 of the surgical equipment in the portion of the image separate from the contact
control area.

95. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:

using patient monitoring equipment attached to the patient during the
surgical procedure to determine information describing a condition of the patient;

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- 5 projecting an optical image of the control device on the surface;
including a contact control area within the image which represents a
control function of the surgical equipment;
creating a portion of the image separate from the contract control area;
obtaining information from the patient monitoring equipment describing
10 the condition of the patient; and
displaying the information describing the condition of the patient in the
portion of the image separate from the contact control area.
96. (Currently amended) A method as defined in claim 66, further
comprising:
using patient monitoring equipment attached to the patient during the
surgical procedure to determine information describing a condition of the patient;
5 projecting an optical image of the control device on the surface;
including a contact control area within the image which represents a
control function of the surgical equipment;
creating a portion of the image separate from the contact ~~contract~~
control area;
10 obtaining information from the surgical equipment concerning the status,
control and functionality of the surgical equipment;
obtaining information from the patient monitoring equipment describing
the condition of the patient;
displaying the information describing the control, status and functionality
15 of the surgical equipment; and
the information describing the condition of the patient in the portion of
the image separate from the contact control area.
97. (Currently amended) A method as defined in claim 96, further
comprising:
optically interrogating the one of the finger or foot of the surgeon with
the contact control area of the image to control the surgical equipment.

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98. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 69, further comprising:

uttering voice commands; and
controlling the image in response to the voice commands.

99. (Currently amended) A method of controlling surgical equipment in an operating room while a surgeon performs a surgical procedure on a patient, comprising:

5 associating an identification tag to at least one of the patient or the surgeon;
presenting information at the identification tag describing at least one of the surgeon, a hand of the surgeon, a foot of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;
presenting an image of a control device for the surgical equipment;
10 interrogating interaction of the surgeon with the control device image;
reading information from the identification tag while the surgeon interacts with the image; and
controlling the surgical equipment only in response to the interaction with the image by ~~[[of]]~~ the surgeon who is described by the information or read from
15 the identification tag.

100.-102. (Canceled)

103. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

reading the information from the identification tag; and
establishing an initial operative setting of the surgical equipment
5 automatically in response to the information read from the identification tag.

104. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

optically reading the information from the identification tag.

105. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

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presenting information at the identification tag describing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment; and

- 5 establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment automatically in response to the information describing the initial operative setting read from the identification tag.

106. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 103, further comprising:

presenting information at the identification tag which describes the surgeon;

- 5 storing information which describes the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment;

correlating the description of the surgeon obtained from reading the identification tag with the stored information; and

establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment based
10 on correlating the described surgeon and the stored information.

107. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 106, further comprising:

presenting information at the identification tag which describes the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

- 5 storing information which describes the surgeon's preferred initial operative settings of the surgical equipment for each of a plurality of different surgical procedures;

correlating the described surgical procedure with the stored information;

and

- 10 establishing the initial operative setting of the surgical equipment based on the correlation between the described surgical procedure and the stored information.

108. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

uttering voice commands; and

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controlling the display image in response to the voice commands.

109.-111. (Canceled)

112. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 10, wherein:

the image is a projected light image; and

the virtual control device further includes an image projector which
5 projects the light image.

113. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 112, further comprising:

a face shield worn by the surgeon; and

a heads up projector connected to the system controller and interactive
5 with the face shield to create a heads up display image on the face shield; and
wherein:

the system controller is connected to the virtual control device to obtain
information describing the position of the projected image of the contact control area
relative to the position of the surgeon's foot; and

10 the heads up projector presents information in the heads up display
image on the face shield describing the relative position of the projected image of the
contact control area relative to the position of the surgeon's foot.

114. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 113, wherein:

virtual control device and the system controller are connected by a
wireless communication path;

5 the system controller and the surgical equipment are connected by a
wireless communication path; and

the heads up projector and the system controller are connected by a
wireless communication path.

115. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 11,
10 wherein:

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the position tag contains information describing at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and further comprising:

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the
15 operating room, the scanner reading the information from the position tag; and wherein:

the system controller establishes control over the surgical equipment in response to the information read from the position tag.

116. (Currently amended) A virtual control system as defined in claim 115, further comprising:

a patient identification tag associated with the patient and containing information which describes the patient; and wherein:

5 the position tag contains information which describes the surgeon;
the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon and the patient; and

the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the identification tag and the position tag which
10 correlates the surgeon with the patient.

117. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 116, wherein:

one of the position tag or the patient identification tag contains information describing the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which describes the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and

the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the identification tag and the position tag which correlates the surgeon and the patient and the surgical procedure.

118. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 3, wherein:

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the object which interacts by contact with the image is a finger of a hand of the surgeon;

5 the image is located adjacent to a surgical site and within a sterile field; and further comprising:

a position tag attached to the hand of the surgeon; and wherein:

the sensor optically interrogates the interaction of the surgeon's finger with the contact control area and also optically interrogates the position of the position
10 tag; and

the system controller responds to the position of the position tag to permit control of the surgical equipment only in response to the contact interaction of the finger of the hand of the surgeon upon which the position tag is attached with the contact control area.

119. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 118, wherein:

the position tag contains information describing at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and
5 further comprising:

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the operating room, the scanner reading the information from the position tag; and wherein:

the system controller establishes control over the surgical equipment in
10 response to the information read from the position tag.

120. (Currently amended) A virtual control system as defined in claim 119, further comprising:

an identification tag associated with the patient and containing information which describes the patient; and wherein:

5 the position tag contains information which describes the surgeon; the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon and the patient; and

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the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the identification tag and the position tag which
10 correlates the surgeon with the patient.

121. (Previously presented) a virtual control system as defined in claim 120, wherein:

one of the position tag or the identification tag contains information describing the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which describes the surgeon, the patient and the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and

the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the identification tag and the position tag which
10 correlates the surgeon and the patient and the surgical procedure.

122. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 52, wherein:

the identification tag is associated with the patient.

123. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 52, wherein:

the identification tag is associated with the surgeon.

124. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 52, wherein:

an identification tag is associated with each of the patient and the surgeon;

5 the identification tag is associated with the patient is a patient identification tag; and

the identification tag associated with the surgeon is a surgeon identification tag.

125. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 124, wherein:

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the surgeon identification tag contains information describing at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the
5 patient;

the patient identification tag contains information describing at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the patient; and further comprising:

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the
10 operating room, the scanner reading the information from the surgeon identification tag and the patient identification tag; and wherein:

the system controller permits operation of the surgical equipment in response to correlation of the information read from the surgeon identification tag and the information read from the patient identification tag.

126. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 123, wherein:

the surgeon identification tag is attached to the foot of the surgeon, the surgeon identification tag containing information describing the surgeon; and further
5 comprising:

a scanner connected to the system controller and located within the operating room, the scanner reading the information from the surgeon identification tag; and wherein:

the virtual control device further includes an image projector which
10 projects a light image of the control panel on the floor of the operating room;

the interaction with the control panel image is by the foot of the surgeon; and

the system controller responds to the information read from the surgeon identification tag to permit control of the surgical equipment only in response to the
15 interaction with the control panel image of the foot of the surgeon upon which the surgeon identification tag is attached.

127. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 126, wherein:

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the control panel image includes a control area which represents an activation function of the surgical equipment; and

5 the interaction is of the foot of the surgeon with the control area which represents the activation function.

128. (Previously presented) A virtual control system as defined in claim 127, wherein:

the virtual control device controls the image projector to project the control panel image on the floor at a position relative to the position of the surgeon
5 identification tag.

129. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

associating the identification tag with the surgeon by the surgeon wearing the identification tag.

130. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 129, further comprising:

the surgeon wearing the identification tag on at least one of a surgical gown, a surgical glove or a foot cover.

131. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

associating the identification tag with the patient by attaching the identification tag to surgical drapes which cover the patient during the procedure.

132. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

associating the identification tag with the patient by attaching the identification tag to the patient's body during the surgical procedure.

133. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

presenting information at the one identification tag which describes the surgeon and the patient;

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5 accessing information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the patient; and

 permitting operation of the surgical equipment only in response to the information read from the one identification tag correlating the surgeon and the patient.

134. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

 presenting information at the one identification tag which describes the surgeon;

5 permitting operation of the surgical equipment only in response to information read from the one identification tag which describes the surgeon; and
 permitting operation of the surgical equipment in response to override information if the information read from the one identification tag does not describe the surgeon.

135. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

 presenting information at the one identification tag which describes the surgeon;

5 the system controller accesses information stored in memory which correlates the surgeon with the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment; and

 creating a display image presenting the information describing the surgeon's preferred initial operative setting of the surgical equipment.

136. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 99, further comprising:

 associating the identification tag with the surgeon by attaching the identification tag to the hand of the surgeon, the identification tag attached to the
5 hand of the surgeon constituting a surgeon identification tag;

 presenting information at the surgeon identification tag identifying the surgeon;

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reading the information from the surgeon identification tag;
projecting a light image of the control device adjacent to a surgical site
10 within a sterile field;

interacting with the control device image by using the hand of the
surgeon; and

permitting control of the surgical equipment only in response to the
interaction of the hand of the surgeon upon which the surgeon identification tag is
attached with the control device image.

137. (Currently amended) A method as defined in claim 99, further
comprising:

associating an identification tag with each of the patient and the
surgeon, the identification tag associated with the patient constituting a patient
identification tag and the identification tag associated with the surgeon constituting a
surgeon identification tag;

presenting information at the surgeon identification tag which describes
at least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on
the patient;

presenting information at the patient identification tag which describes at
least one of the surgeon, the patient or the surgical procedure to be performed on the
patient;

reading the information from the surgeon identification tag and the
patient identification tag;

permitting operation of the surgical equipment in response to correlation
of the information read from the surgeon identification tag and the information read
from the patient identification tag.

138. (Currently amended) A method as defined in claim 99, further
comprising:

associating the identification tag with the surgeon by attaching the
identification tag to the foot of the surgeon, the identification tag attached to the foot
5 of the surgeon constituting a surgeon identification tag;

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presenting information at the surgeon identification tag containing
describing the surgeon;

reading the information from the surgeon identification tag;

projecting a light image of the control device on the floor of the

10 operating room;

interacting with the control device image by using the foot of the
surgeon; and

permitting control of the surgical equipment only by interacting with the
control device image with the foot of the surgeon upon which the surgeon

15 identification tag is attached.

139. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 138, further
comprising:

including a control area within the control device image which
represents an activation function of the surgical equipment; and

5 interacting the foot of the surgeon with the control area which
represents the activation function.

140. (Previously presented) A method as defined in claim 139, further
comprising:

projecting the control device image on the floor at a position relative to
the position of the surgeon identification tag.